

West Area Plan Steering Committee Meeting #8



Date and Time: April 16, 2020 6:00pm
Location: Virtual Meeting, Microsoft Teams

Attendees

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS (PRESENT)

Rosemary McDonnell-Horita	Maureen McCanna
Bree Davies	Adriana Pena
Kaye Kavanagh	Dan Shah
Brien Darby	Dannie Dilonno
Jeanne Granville	Korey Whitaker
Sean Brady	Jaime Aguilar

ELECTED OFFICIALS/COUNCIL DISTRICT AIDES

Councilman Jolon Clark, District 7	Melissa Mejia, District 3
Councilwoman Jaime Torres, District 3	Daisy Rocha Vasquez, District 3
Anita Banuelos, District 7	
Ben Chavez, District 3	

COMMUNITY PLANNING PROJECT TEAM

Eugene Howard	Becca Dierschow
Valerie Herrera	Sung Han
Beth Vogelsang, OV	Ana Claudia Magalhaes, DPR
Fernando Abbud, OV	Anne Kuechenmeister, MBI
Kayla Gilbert, DOTI	Ryan Sotirakis DIG Studio
Bill Vitek, DIG Studio	

Meeting Summary

1. WELCOME

Eugene opened the meeting at 6:03 PM

2. AGENDA FOR THE EVENING

- Tonight's topic is Quality of Life: "All things green"
- Focus areas: climate resiliency and air quality
- Green infrastructure
- Parks, open space, recreation, trails and gulches

The project team is also always trying new and different ways to gather input - tonight we will be using Poll Everywhere, which will allow Steering committee members to text responses to questions during the presentation. These responses will show up on the screen in real time.

Poll Everywhere question: **a great park is ____**

Response: Green, sustainable, accessible, safe, cultural, multi-use, full of people, close, shady, inviting, lush

Focus Topic: Climate Resiliency

Beth showed a series of maps that illustrate different aspects of climate resiliency in the West area.

Impervious surfaces - 52% vs 44% for the rest of the city - creates an urban heat island

Urban heat island - especially in industrial areas, along corridors

Tree canopy - lacking particularly in Sun Valley, Valverde, Stadium District and along corridors

All these factors magnify the effects of global warming, make it harder for neighborhoods to respond to climate changes

Green Infrastructure

One aspect of green infrastructure is designed to tackle stormwater management - how does water move across the neighborhoods in the planning area? Where do we experience localized flooding? As water moves across impervious surfaces, it picks up pollutants, then flows into the gulches and river, leading to poor water quality. As we re-green our community what does our water quality look like?

Benefits:

- Improved water quality
- Reduce flood risk
- Reduce heat island effect

What can green infrastructure look like?

- Parks, gulches, bioswales, green roofs, etc.
- Rain gardens, rain barrels, bulbouts (remove street parking, increase ped safety and filter water), green alleyways

Question for the group: What types of green infrastructure are most appealing to you all?

bulbouts	17
parks	16
gulches	12
alleys	11
Rain gardens	7
roofs	4
bioswales	4
rain barrels	3

Question: Valverde and Barnum are 'high priority' - what does this mean?

Response: High priority for water quality improvements - due to water basin, impervious surfaces, industrial area etc.

Questions: What does that mean? When will progress be made? Currently in process or future plans?

Response: Not sure - will investigate it, will work with DOTI, bring the Steering Committee ideas to the table in their process

Question: Some options are public improvements, some are private - on the industrial area Part of a private conversation - how much can we influence as part of a neighborhood plan?

Response: we've had a pretty good response from private developers on other plans - who are using the neighborhood plans when proposing large scale projects. Also helps build community as people see their work being reflected

Question: What is the status of grey water? Rain gardens + rain barrels. We aren't supposed to be using gray water for vegetables etc., correct?

Response: Rain gardens and barrels aren't designed to capture rainwater for use on vegetable gardens. Instead, rain gardens slow water from entering the water management system, and filter it through the ground before it gets to the river. Also intended to slow water to avoid overwhelming the water management system. Not for garden use, for cleaning water. Rain gardens can also be pretty and include plants that provide benefits to local wildlife and insects

Poll Everywhere Question for group: Would you be willing to trade on-street parking spaces for green space? (Looking for a strategic and limited application - typically around corners and such)

Some of them	6
Yes, take them all	6
Don't touch them.	4

The committee was split on this topic.

Comments:

- Not everyone has garages, need parking. Prefer tree lawns. Consider adding sidewalks and tree lawns
- Street corners are a great place to start
- My street is wide. Thinner streets slow down traffic. I would rather reduce drivable area on local streets to slow cars down by expanding green space.

Comment (Beth): if a street is wide enough, you can add a green strip and keep all the on-street parking! great comments everyone!

How and where should we increase the tree canopy in your neighborhood?

- Please add trees along major corridors. my dream is for Federal and Alameda to look like 6th/17th/MLK on the east side
- Improve the designated parkway of Federal Blvd.
- We need trees throughout neighborhoods too. Valverde has whole blocks without canopy cover. Trees do AMAZING things for the community. I'd love to provide research about how trees reduce crime, improve mental health and well-being, and increase pedestrian/bike mobility.
- I've canvassed for the free trees in Barnum and folks seemed not very interested in getting/caring for trees. Maybe just one more thing. Maybe an adopt-a-block tree care for street trees?

Parks, Open Space, Recreation Trails and Gulches

Types of Parks: Regional, community, neighborhood, pocket
Privately owned open space - community gardens, etc.

Question: are [privately owned open spaces] used by the public or are they often exclusive?

Response: Great question, as part of 10% open space requirement for redevelopment and development, private owned spaces/publicly accessible are open to the public

Comment: For privately owned space, to improve, change the open space requirements in the zoning code by adding a higher percentage. Case in point the St. Anthony Hospital redevelopment

Question: What would you like to see in parks?

- are barbecues being put into the newer parks? this has come up as desired in Sun Valley, but we weren't sure if it was being done anymore
- BBQ's are still an amenity we implement in parks
- Quinceaneras, neighborhood movie night
- Not only improving what we have but adding more green space - Valverde

What types of activities and spaces would you like to see or see more of?

- Wheelchair accessible playgrounds
- Flex space, I saw a group playing Cricket recently in Paco Sanchez park
- in Barnum, our newest and nicest playground was a kaboom! community build but then the land owner, Savio House, put up a fence and locked it. (back to the privately-owned land topic)
- What about general accessibility re: sidewalks? Thinking about friends with disabilities having access to park activities in general
- More flower beds maintained by DPR
- Better sanitary facilities, more trash cans, more doggy poop canisters
- more handwashing stations for folks experiencing homelessness / public restrooms
- Yes, public restrooms at more parks please

- Making water accessible and interactive - Platte or gulches in the future
- Might not want it everywhere but some areas for water

Poll Everywhere: What is particularly challenging about access to parks, open space?

A sample from the 64 comments we received from the Steering Committee:

- The contrast between parks and neighborhoods is extreme
- Lack wayfinders
- Lack of safe crossings between parks and paths/trails
- Wayfinding difficult for weir gulch
- Neighbor connectivity between parks/trails
- Located too far from most residents (in Valverde)
- Dirty parks: needles, trash
- Not ADA accessible
- General access to paths/park space for people with disabilities
- Safe crossings of streets to parts of trails that get water logged/lack drainage
- Equity issue - SE Denver for example has nice trails
- Second the equity comment- the contrasts between our parks and trails and more affluent neighborhoods is clear

Other Comments on Challenges:

- The gulches don't go all the way through. Take Lakewood Gulch for example. the trail gets private to Sheridan from Tennison, West.
- have a lot of awesome parks but right across the street is very impervious etc.
- Contrast between gulches and neighborhood would be nice to have transition, to draw people into
- the gulches drop off frequently and have on-street crossings every block. makes much more stressful riding than say the cherry creek trail on opposite side of Denver
- Sixth Avenue freeway is sharp barrier -
- Lakewood Gulch - hopefully the floodplain is being addressed. we had a tragic event about 12 years ago - mother walking a child in a stroller on the gulch path - flash flooding that swept away the child in the stroller. Ever since then playing near the Gulch is really discouraged by parents. plus, it's a busy bike path
- I will highlight the intersection at 13th and Knox -- residents of Westridge Homes note that it's a barrier to Paco Sanchez

Comment (Beth): Sounds like the approach to the park must feel as nice as the park is. Yes! Safe walk to park that's exciting and mentally nurturing will increase park use without even upgrading the parks! thanks for summarizing that.

- Add art work along the Federal Blvd Parkway where trees are not allowed to be planted
- Art to reflect cultural diversity
- Art builds character and community. Have you ever been to Mexico City? Art is the heart of the streets there.
- Local artists: Anthony Garcia, Cal Duran Westwood area neighborhood also has tons of artists and youth that we could engage
- Personally, i prefer nature over art. We are lacking city provided trees and gardens to beautify our neighborhoods and streets. Then, I think we should look at adding art work
- Can't plant trees on Feds - on our edge, in the "median" there are tons of pipes, wires, a gulch and other nuisances underneath the road.

- I agree. I like nature better. But I love art work on human infrastructure like multi use paths under passes. Graffiti is a challenge with artwork.

Future Meetings:

- The project team is looking into different platforms for hosting our next Public Meeting. Looking into: MS Teams, a Live Broadcast (Facebook Live) or online 'modules' that are static but allow people to return to different modules as they have time and capacity.
- Some members are very concerned about moving too quickly through the process and about moving the process online only, which could negatively impact outreach and is inequitable. Many committee members suggested finding ways to still meet in person or provide opportunities for input that were not digital.
- Councilman Clark suggested "Meetings in a box" - host one or two meetings for people who are comfortable in smaller settings, allows people to engage in person. May be allowed sooner than big public meetings
- Comment: Would like to see a comprehensive COVID response, rather than a patch work of suggestions
 - Response: The city is currently working on this - will circle back when we have a draft.

[END OF MEETING]